




Speech By  
**Ann Leahy**

**MEMBER FOR WARREGO**

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Record of Proceedings, 1 December 2015

### **FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES COMMISSION AMENDMENT BILL**

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (3.46 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Family Responsibilities Commission Amendment Bill 2015. The objective of the bill is to make amendments to the Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008 to increase the effectiveness of the Family Responsibilities Commission, an independent statutory authority established under the act to support the program known as welfare reform. In this case, welfare reform is applicable to five communities in North Queensland: Aurukun, Coen, Doomadgee, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. In the past I have visited the communities of Aurukun, Coen and Hope Vale and I reiterate the comments of my colleague that those communities are very different places and face very different challenges.

I would like to thank the committee staff for their assistance with the inquiry and the professionalism in which they undertook the task within the time frame assigned. Owing to the time frame, the committee was unable to travel to the five communities to speak firsthand with the members of the communities or the community leaders. I would like to thank the shadow minister and also the member for Caloundra for spending time in Hope Vale. I can assure the House that the people in that community would have appreciated that support and also the input that they gave to those members when they were in Hope Vale. As a member representing a regional area, I know how important it is for communities and community members and leaders to talk firsthand with members of parliament about changes to legislation. It was disappointing to not be able to give the communities the opportunity to meet with the committee and the committee members to hear firsthand from the community members.

However, the committee invited submissions from 157 stakeholder organisations and received two submissions. During the public briefing the committee was advised by the department that, on its consultation on the bill, meetings were held in relation to welfare reform in those community areas. The department advised that community consultations confirmed that each of the communities were supportive of the proposed amendments. I hope that in future the committee is able to hear firsthand from such affected communities on important legislative changes and not just rely on departmental consultation advice. I would also like to thank my fellow committee members from both sides of the House for their participation and input in relation to working our way through this legislation.

The bill implements the recommendations of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, and I commend the former LNP government for establishing that task force. The task force recommended the introduction of a domestic and family violence trigger related to the making of a protection order by the court. The bill proposes an amendment to introduce a new domestic violence trigger for agency notices to the Family Responsibilities Commission.

It also provides for clarification on the processes for existing youth justice agency notices and the delegation of the commissioners' functions to local Indigenous community leaders. The bill enables enhancements to the registrar position of the Family Responsibilities Commission to allow for the

position to perform the role of general manager and make budgetary and human resources decisions. That is particularly important when you are operating in a rural and remote area.

The bill also removes outdated references to the CDEP scheme. The CDEP scheme was a federal government program. It has now been phased out in many areas. I am, however, advised by constituents of my electorate that they found the CDEP scheme to be a successful one in their area. I commend the bill to the House.